

**SPODOPTERA CILIUM GUEN., (LEP.: NOCTUIDAE). A SPECIES
NEW TO BRITAIN, AND OTHER RARE MIGRANTS AT THE
LIZARD**

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ON THE night of 29th September 1990 at Coverack on the Lizard Peninsula, Cornwall, a small noctuid appeared after midnight in a mv trap set in a beautifully overgrown garden. The moth resembled *Spodoptera exigua* Hb. although it was slightly darker and more variegated. The resting posture was also atypical, *S. exigua* sits with its wings inclined to the vertical but this specimen held its wings in a similar position to that adopted by *Hoplodrina ambigua* D. & S. or *blanda* D. & S. After some thought (and after establishing that it was a male, of course!) it was provisionally identified as an aberrant *S. exigua*.

The following night I visited a scrubby area near the cliffs north of Coverack. Shortly after lighting up, on the second tour of the lights, a perfect male *Polymixis xanthomista* D. & S. arrived at an ultra violet tube; whilst leaning down to box it a blurred white shape irrorated with red and black appeared on the side of the trap. Even out of the corner of the eye its identity was unmistakable and seen directly it was a vision of glory, an immaculate male *Utethesia pulchella* L.

Nothing much happened for the rest of the night despite favourable winds until 02.00 hours when two *Mythimna loreyi* Dup. bundled into the trap followed by two *M. unipuncta* Haw., two *M. vitellina* Hb., a fertile female *Heliothis armigera* Hb. and two *Agrius convolvuli* L. Later that night a fine selection of pyrales arrived including no less than five *Uresiphita polygonalis* D. & S., one large *Dioryctria abietella* D. & S. (presumably a migrant) and a *Margaritia sticticalis* L. Migrant geometers were represented by a male *Othonama obstipata* Fabr. and ten *Rhodometra sacraria* L. Interestingly the commoner migrants were very thin on the ground.

The following night, again shortly after dusk, two more perfect *U. pulchella* came to mv together with *H. armigera*, *H. peltigera* D. & S., half a dozen *O. obstipata*, a male *A. convolvuli*, two *M. unipuncta* and four *M. vitellina* (all of the pale straw form). On returning to our cottage I was almost disappointed not to find another *U. pulchella*; however on lifting up the wooden bar on which the bulb is mounted a soft "mothy" feeling under my fingers turned out to be the fourth *U. pulchella*. This last example (also a male) was very faded whilst the coloration of the others was pristine.

Intensive trapping for the remainder of the week yielded little in the way of rare migrants although a few more *R. sacraria*, an infertile female *Mythimna albipuncta* D. & S. and one *Palpita unionalis* Hb. were seen.

Macroglossum stellatarum L. was exceptionally common and was observed every day on almost every buddleia bush even feeding in heavy rain.

The moth provisionally identified as *S. exigua* was then shown at the BENHS exhibition and evoked considerable debate as to its identity; the consensus of opinion was that it was probably *Spodoptera cilium* Guen. and this has since been confirmed as such by Dr Ian Kitching at the British Museum (Natural History).

S. cilium is a species whose normal range is essentially African and Eastern although it does extend into southern Spain and France as well as the Canaries. The diagnostic feature in the male is the ciliated antennae which are very distinct from *S. exigua* when viewed under a binocular microscope. Although the species is variable there are certain characteristics which are reasonably consistent. The forewings are slightly broader than *S. exigua* and the moth is generally darker, more variegated and less glossy in appearance. Characteristic of *S. exigua* is the pinkish coloration of the orbicular stigma, in *S. cilium* this stigma is pale but not pink. The reniform stigma is conspicuously dark. On the hind wings the brownish shading which runs up the veins from the outer margin towards the base in *S. exigua* only extends a short distance and the overall appearance of the hindwing is a translucent white lacking the pearly sheen of *S. exigua*. At rest my example sat in a very different posture to that adopted by *S. exigua*. The specimen will be photographed for publication in the 1991 exhibition plate in the *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History*.

The larva feeds on various species of grass and reaches pest status in parts of Africa especially favouring close cut turf on golf courses.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Dr Ian Kitching for confirming the specimen and for providing the article on the genus *Spodoptera*.

Reference

Calle, J. *Noctuidos Espanoles*.

Brown and Dewhurst, The genus *Spodoptera* in Africa and the Near East. *Bull. Ent. Res.* 65: 221-262.

Ledra aurita (L. 1758) (Auch.: Cicadellidae) at light in Worcestershire (SO94).

On the night of 2.viii.1990 an adult *Ledra aurita* (L.) was taken in an m.v. light trap at Little Comberton, Worcestershire. This is a southern species in Britain, known to be attracted to light. It breeds in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire very locally on oak (*Quercus robur* L.).— H.S. HEMSLEY-HALL, Orchard Drive, Little Comberton, Worcs WR10 3EP.